

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LEADING CORRIERE NEWSPAPERMAN ON PCI, JOURNALISM, AND
VIOLENCE IN MILAN

1. CONSUL GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER LUNCHEDED MARCH 16
WITH SPECIALIST ON INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS FOR CORRIERE
DELLA SERA AND PERHAPS PAPER'S TOP JOURNALIST. HE IS
WRITER OF QUALITY AND APPARENT INTEGRITY WHO IS FAVORITE
OF CORRIERE EDITOR PIERO OTTONE. HE IS ALSO AMIABLE
PERSONALITY AND SELF-DESCRIBED FRIEND OF U.S.

2. REFERENCE HAVING BEEN MADE TO HIS FRONT PAGE ARTICLE
OF MARCH 16 (THERE IS A MILAN WHICH MAY BE GOING INSANE),
JOURNALIST DISCOURSED ON ORIGINS OF VIOLENCE WHOSE LATEST
MANIFESTATION INVOLVED BOMBINGS IN MILAN PREVIOUS
DAY BY EXTREMIST ELEMENTS SUPPOSEDLY PROTESTING BY-
STANDER'S ACCIDENTAL DEATH IN ROME FROM STRAY POLICE
BULLET. HE REJECTED SUGGESTION THAT PERPETRATORS OF
THIS AND OTHER SOCIO-POLITICAL VIOLENCE ARE ACTING
AT BEHEST OF UNSEEN MANIPULATORS OR THAT THEY ARE EVEN
ORGANIZED. LEADERS, HE EXPLAINED, ARE YOUNG LEFTISTS
OF 20 - 25 WHO FEEL THAT TRADITIONAL POLITICAL FORCES,
INCLUDING COMMUNISTS, ARE MUCH TOO CONSERVATIVE TO

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EFFECT RA CHANGE. THESE RADICALS PROSELYTIZE

OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE OF POOR BACKGROUNDS WHO, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE COME FROM SOUTHERN ITALY TO FIND WORK WHICH IS NOT AVAILABLE. SUCH PEOPLE ARE OFTEN DESTITUTE AND HAVE NOTHING TO OCCUPY THEIR TIME, MAKING THEM RIPE FOR CONVERSION TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE. THESE GROUPS, HE ASSERTED, ARE CONTINUALLY FORMING AND DISSOLVING, SO THAT THEIR MISBEHAVIOUR TAKES ON RANDOM AND UNPREDICTABLE CHARACTER.

3. WRITER CONCLUDED FROM THIS PICTURE THAT, ALTHOUGH MILAN SITUATION IS TENSE AND EVEN IN SENSE EXPLOSIVE, PREMEDITATED REVOLUTION IS NOT IN CARDS: NONE OF MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS WANTS SUCH BREAKDOWN, NO LEADERS OUTSIDE MAJOR GROUPS ARE IN POSITION TO GUIDE IT, AND, IN ANY CASE, LAWBREAKERS WHO ENGAGE IN ACTS LIKE THOSE OF PREVIOUS DAY ARE NO MORE THAN SEVERAL THOUSAND IN CITY OF 1,800,000. REAL DANGER, HE CONTINUED, IS THAT OF CREEPING DETERIORATION OF LAW AND ORDER, UNGUIDED BY ANYONE BUT AIDED MIGHTILY BY INEFFICIENCY OF POLICE FORCES. HE CLAIMED TO BE ALARMED NOT BY POLICE CORRUPTION, CERTAIN MEASURE OF WHICH TO BE EXPECTED AMONG UNEDUCATED AND BADLY PAID INDIVIDUALS WHO CONSTITUTE MUCH OF POLICE, BUT SIMPLY INABILITY OF POLICE TO FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY.

4. SPEAKING OF PCI BEHAVIOUR IN FACE OF VIOLENCE AND OTHER DISORDERS, JOURNALIST CONTENDED THAT COMMUNISTS' PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARGUE FOR CONCLUSION THAT THEY SINCERELY FAVOR END TO SUCH DISORDERS. UNITA OF MARCH 16, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS ONLY MAJOR NEWSPAPER TO HEADLINE MILAN BOMBINGS WITH NO MENTION OF WHAT SEEMED TO SOME LIKE PROVOCATION TO LEFT BY ROME POLICE, IVZ. POLICE SHOOTING OF INNOCENT BYSTANDER. MOREOVER, HE CONTINUED, UNITA DOWNPLAYED LOCKHEED SCANDAL (WHICH JOURNALIST COVERED CLOSELY FOR CORRIERE) FOR FIRST FIFTEEN DAYS AFTER NEWS BROKE. HE SAID THAT HIGH PCI OFFICIAL IN ROME TOLD HIM PARTY DELIBERATELY WENT LIGHT ON MATTER IN KNOWLEDGE THAT DAMAGED BY SUCH REVELATIONS COULD DESTROY REPUBLIC. STRONG SOCIETY LIKE US, OFFICIAL SAID, CAN WITHSTAND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHOCK OF PRESIDENTIAL IMPEACHMENT. ITALIAN DEMOCRACY, HOWEVER, MIGHT NOT RECOVER FROM SIMILARLY GRAVE CONVULSION.

5. COMMENTING FURTHER ON PCI, JOURNALIST SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH MILAN'S PCI-PSI CONTROLLED CITY COUNCIL HAS MADE FEW CHANGES SINCE LAST JUNE 15, ONE IS WORTHY OF NOTE. PREVIOUSLY, MANY SUPPLIERS TO CITY WERE

NOT BEING PAID AND HAD NO REALISTIC HOPE OF RECOUPING MONEY CITY OWNED THEM. PCI, ON JOINING MAJORITY, TOOK INITIATIVE TO GET CITY CREDITORS TO FORM GROUP AMONG THEMSELVES TO WHICH CITY BEGAN TO MAKE REGULAR REPAYMENTS, LETTING GROUP DISTRIBUTE FUNDS TO NEEDIEST FIRMS AS IT WISHED. EVENTUALLY ALL FIRMS SHOULD BE PAID IN FULL. ARRANGEMENT HAS GREATLY PLEASED CREDITORS, WHO, WITHOUT PCI INITIATIVE, WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE BEEN PAID AT ALL.

6. HAVING SPOKEN FAVORABLY OF PCI AT SOME LENGTH, JOURNALIST AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER TO TAKE COMMUNISTS AT WORD. ALL ONE CAN DO, HE SAID, IS FOLLOW WHAT THEY SAY AND WATCH WHAT THEY DO. AS FAR AS PUBLIC ORDER CONCERNED, HE SAID HE BELIEVES PCI SINCERELY WANTS IT A MOMENT. AS FOR REST, NO ONE CAN BE SURE.

7. JOURNALIST HAD GOOD WORDS FOR CORRIERE AND ITS EDITOR PIERO OTTONE, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS STRONG BUT DIPLOMATIC CHIEF GENUINELY INTERESTED IN HONEST AND OBJECTIVE REPORTING. HE DID NOT DISAGREE, HOWEVER, WITH CRITICISM OF CORRIERE'S ECONOMIC PAGES AS WEAK IN ANALYSIS AND MARRED OFTEN BY IMPORTANT OMISSIONS, WHICH ONE SUSPECTED MIGHT BE IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED. HE ADDED THAT OTTONE IS BESET WITH LABOR AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS AND CANNOT PAY AS MUCH ATTENTION TO ECONOMIC CONTENT AS HE SHOULD. HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT MUCH OF PROBLEM AROSE FROM SIMPLY INCOMPETENCE OF CORRIERE'S ECONOMIC JOURNALISTS.FINA

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